

News Letter

OF THE

CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE & PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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Vol. II

April, 1952

No. 2

So likewise ye, except ye utter
by the tongue words easy to un-
derstand, how shall it be known
what is spoken? for ye shall
speak into the air.

---I Corinthians 14

A Few Words on Words

If any system of vocabulary does not serve the purpose of providing a short-cut for the expression of ideas otherwise capable of being expressed only at great length, then that system serves no useful purpose. A vocabulary which reproduces simple concepts in formidable language is obscurantist and pedantic, and we rightly shun it. The hesitancy of some literary critics to venture into strange fields of language might, however, be forgiven if their hesitancy went the whole way, but too often it goes only so far as a failure to learn the full connotations of an enchanting new term, coupled with the use of that term in and out of season, often for the expression of meanings it was never meant to convey.

The difficulty sometimes arises for us when we take over a concept from medical psychology and apply it to literary criticism. As evidenced by the comments of Dr. Wormhoudt and Dr. Ford on Dr. Griffin's convention paper, some small controversy seems to have arisen as to the denotation and connotation of the terms "psychoanalyzing the author" and "psychoanalyzing a book." It should be obvious from the outset that the critic of literature does not envisage "psychoanalyzing" as a therapeutic method. We are concerned with the earlier steps in the process, those steps in which the analyst seeks to understand and interpret the drives and conflicts of the "patient." We need not concern ourselves with the more arduous processes of therapy itself. For us the psychoanalyzing process (and it would be best to use the full term, since "analyzing" and "analysis" will only get us into further difficulties) may serve best to accomplish those ends which Bernard De Voto once envisaged as its goal:

Thus, if a literary psychoanalyst examining a dozen novels by one many found the same emotional pattern in them all he would feel confident that the pattern was really important to the novelist. . . . The reappearance in a dozen different novels of the same constellation of anxiety, the same relationship between the characters, or the same mechanism of

gratification or release, would indicate that it expressed a constant need of the novelist. Using this clue, literary psychoanalysis might then show in detail how the psychic energy involved gave warmth and vitality to many parts of the novel.

Romans à Clef---SRL, Apr. 5, 1938, p. 8.

L. F. M.

Correspondence

Letter from Wm. J. Ford, M. D., of Chicago, referring to Dr. Wormhoudt's letter in the last issue:

On the current discussion begun by the Griffin paper, I would take a stand near Mr Wormhoudt. His answer to the blunt statement that "you cannot psychoanalyze a book" is a good summing up: psychological theory can be used in the study, interpretation and appreciation of literature.

The opposition (not to be found on the subscription list of NEWS LETTER) is really hiding a deep prejudice against psychological truths and methods they find unpleasant. This carries over into clinical medicine as well as applied psychology in many fields.

When Mr Wormhoudt says that no other kind of analysis is worth the trouble except that of the unconscious, for this he must find other adherents. Most psychiatric effort has been concerned with the conscious (an analyst-authority for this is Hendrick) and very few of us non-psychoanalyzed readers will admit that introspection, study and observation will not be worth much trouble in achieving psychoanalytic orientation.

For those who find all the hyphenated Psycho-somethings distasteful, the term Dynamic Psychiatry may serve. But even now, the prejudiced assail it for glib and hastily-constructed views of Man. Since it is essentially psychoanalytic psychology, it will have the same opponents in time.

Excerpts from a letter from Dr. Fred A. Dudley of Washington State College, in reply to a suggestion that there might be some sort of cooperative effort between our Conference and the MLA Group which discusses Literature and Science:

My first reaction to the literature-and-psychology conference was that it was a pity that the attendance was so small. Mr. Griffin's carefully-prepared paper deserved a larger audience, and it would have been instructive to those who are inclined to brush aside all psychoanalytic study of literature as what he brilliantly called "Freudulent."

As to the objection that your conference should not exist, that seems to me completely unsound. Such meetings are set up for the express purpose of facilitating discussion among small groups. . . . (A) conference of say ten to thirty scholars with a common interest may prove to be more rewarding than the usual group or section meetings. . . . (I)nterested groups should take full advantage of the present arrangements for scheduling limited-attendance conferences. . . .

Bibliographical Note

Our "running bibliographies" have now reached such proportions that the time has come to take stock and to look forward to an index which will appear during the present year. When this feature of NEWS LETTER was instituted, we gave each listing of books and articles a number. BIBLIOGRAPHY (I), published in the second number (Apr., 1951), was made up chiefly of books. BIBLIOGRAPHY (II), in the third number (June, 1951), continued the listing of books but concentrated on periodicals, beginning with the Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus, which indexes articles from most of the clinical journals, and Psychological Abstracts, which indexes books and articles from non-clinical journals as well. In this BIBLIOGRAPHY (II) several periodicals were briefly described and articles from a sequence of volumes listed. Included were THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY (Vols. 1943 to 1948 were searched), THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGY (Vol. 17—1938 only), CHARACTER & PERSONALITY (Vols. I to IX—1932-1941), PSYCHOANALYTIC QUARTERLY (Vols. I to VI), PSYCHOANALYTIC REVIEW (which dates from 1913, although only Vols. XII to XVIII—1925-1931—searched), INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PSYCHOANALYSIS (the "Collective Review" of Hanns Sachs in 1921 was cited, and the 1923 volume searched), and THE JOURNAL OF ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY (after Vol. XV called THE JOURNAL OF ABNORMAL & SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY—Vols. VII, XIV, and XVII searched).

BIBLIOGRAPHY (III) appeared in the fourth NEWS LETTER (Sept., 1951) and was the last to be numbered. For convenience in reference hereafter, the following listings, however brief, should also be numbered: in NEWS LETTER No. 5-6 (Nov., 1951) "Acknowledgments" will be referred to as BIBLIOGRAPHY (IV); "Continuation of Bibliography" in Vol. II, No. 1 (Feb., 1952) will be referred to as BIBLIOGRAPHY (V). BIBLIOGRAPHY (VI) appears below.

Your editors have been fortunate in having the assistance of interested members in preparing some of the past bibliographical material. Contributions to the present issue are acknowledged below. We are still in need of assistance in searching issue of periodicals which were not covered in the list given above, in searching periodicals not yet mentioned, and in covering issue of PARTISAN REVIEW and AMERICAN LITERATURE not yet searched.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (VI)

Dr. Griffin has sent in the first six items. Although the last two of these were listed in BIBLIOGRAPHY (II), at page 4 in the June, 1951, issue, we reproduce here the full listing in order to take advantage of Dr. Griffin's comments:

Professor Harold G. McCurdy of the University of North Carolina has sent me a sheaf of reprints (all his articles). . . . I have had time to read only the one from the JOURNAL OF AESTHETICS AND ART CRITICISM, which is (for the most part) a sensible argument for a critical analysis of methods applied to psychological studies of literature. The part I doubt relates to reduction of studies to mathematical formulae—the sort of thing he tried in "A Mathematical Aspect of Fictional Literature. . . ." The articles he sent me are as follows:

"Literature as a Resource in Personality Study: Theory and Methods," JOURNAL OF AESTHETICS & ART CRITICISM, VIII, No. 1 (Sept., 1949), 42-46.

"A Mathematical Aspect of Fictional Literature Pertinent to McDougall's Theory of a Hierarchy of Sentiments," JOURNAL OF PERSONALITY, XVII, No. 1 (Sept., 1948), 75-82.

"A Study in the Novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë As an Expression of Their Personalities," JOURNAL OF PERSONALITY, XVI, No. 2 (Dec., 1947), 109-152.

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci," CHARACTER & PERSONALITY, XIII, No. 2 (Dec., 1944), 166-177.

"Literature and Personality: An Analysis of the Novels of D. H. Lawrence," CHARACTER & PERSONALITY, VIII, Nos. 3-4 (March and June, 1940), 181-263, 311-322.

"Literature and Personality," CHARACTER & PERSONALITY, VII, No. 4 (June, 1939), 300-308.

We feel that greater unity may be attained by presenting in a single list the relevant articles from one periodical. The following (prepared by E. L. N.) continues the listing from CHARACTER & PERSONALITY begun in BIBLIOGRAPHY (II):

Vols. X and XI have no articles in our field. Vol. XII, in addition to the Rosenzweig article on Henry James (in No. 2) which was mentioned in BIBLIOGRAPHY (II), has in No. 3 (March, 1944), 195-206:

Elwyn Allen Smith - "Psychological Aspects of Kierkegaard." While mere psychological analysis of Kierkegaard's life and writings does not in itself suffice to appreciate him fully, nevertheless, his thinking is in such large part traceable to personal character patterns that psychology ranks as the most important of the several disciplines required to understand him."

Vol. XIII, in addition to the McCurdy article listed above, has in No. 3 (March-June, 1945), 245-260:

O. L. Zangwill (Edinburgh, Scotland) - "A Case of Paramnesia in Nathaniel Hawthorne." After a brief survey of opinion on the phenomenon of déjà vu, showing that they "fall into two broad groups," there is related an instance of déjà vu---an experience of reduplication---which Hawthorne himself traced to a vivid passage from Pope. Related images are discovered in Hawthorne's other writings, and their significance in terms of his life history are discussed. There is a bibliography, two of the articles cited being by R. W. Pickford, "Rossetti's 'Sudden Light' as an Experience of Déjà Vu," in the BRITISH JOURNAL OF MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. 19 (1942), 186 et seq.; and "Déjà Vu in Proust and Tolstoy," INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PSYCHOANALYSIS, Vol. 25 (1944), 155 et seq.

Beginning with Vol. XIV (1945-46) the name of this journal was changed to THE JOURNAL OF PERSONALITY, with an accompanying change in "editorial orientation" toward more "strictly professional psychological purposes." There are no articles in our field in this volume. Vol. XV, No. 1 (Sept., 1946), 1-40, has;

Anne Roe - "Artists and Their Work." Tangential to our field, this study of twenty living American painters "who have been extraordinarily successful in the peculiarly difficult profession of the artist," is "concerned primarily with the interrelationships between their vocation and their emotional needs and satisfactions."

Vol. XVI, in addition to the articles on the Brontës listed above, has in No. 3 (March, 1948), 278-303:

M. C. Albrecht (University of Buffalo) - "Psychological Motives in the Fiction of Julien Green." The author distinguishes more or less directly autobiographical works from "those which portray characters and events rather different from the author and his experiences, which nevertheless 'reflect' the personality of the writer." Julien Green is a writer of works of the second type. The present article is Professor Albrecht's second study of Julien Green. The first appeared in THE JOURNAL OF ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. 41 (1946), 169-189.

Vol. XVII has the McCurdy article on the mathematical aspect of fiction listed above. Vol. XVIII has no articles in our field. Vol. XIX (1950-51) was not searched.

Mr. Louis Fraiberg has contributed the following listing of articles from PARTISAN REVIEW from 1946 to 1951, inclusive. He notes that "not only literature, but also music, drama, sculpture, painting, politics, and social affairs are sometimes treated in PR with (greater or lesser) psychological insight." The listing is alphabetical within the years mentioned;

Newton Arvin - "Principles of Criticism," XVI (March, 1949), 318-321. (Review of Wellek and Warren, Theory of Literature. Criticizes adversely the chapter on Literature and Psychology.)

William Barrett - "Dialogue on Anxiety," XIV, (March-April, 1947), 151-159.

----- - "Dry Land, Dry Martini," XVII (April, 1950), 354-359. (Review of T. S. Eliot, The Cocktail Party.)

----- - "Man Without Super-Ego," XII (Summer, 1946), 393-394. (Review of Paul Goodman, Art and Social Nature.)

----- - "New Innocents Abroad," XVII (March, 1950), 272-291.

----- - "Writers and Madness," XIV (Jan.-Feb., 1947), 5-22.

Marie Bonaparte - "The Black Cat," XVII (Nov.-Dec., 1950), 834-860. (A chapter from her The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psychoanalytical Interpretation. See NEWS LETTER of April, 1951, page 3, and June, 1951, page 1. Note also that in the review of Mowrer's book by Dr. Griffin in the last issue Mme. Bonaparte is incorrectly referred to as "Napoleon.")

Richard Chase - "An Approach to Melville," XIV (May-June, 1947), 285-294.

----- - "Dissent on Billy Budd," XV (Nov., 1948), 1212-1218

----- - "Myth Revisited," XVII (Nov.-Dec., 1950), 885-891. (New NEWS LETTER of November, 1951, page 4.)

----- - "Notes on the Study of Myth," XII (Summer, 1946), 338-346.

Robert Graham Davis - "Art and Analysis," XVII (Nov.-Dec., 1950), 872-876. (Review of Edmund Bergler, The Writer and Psychoanalysis, and Daniel E. Schneider, The Psychoanalyst and the Artist. See NEWS LETTER, Nov., 1951, and also below.)

F. W. Dupee - "Adjusting Hamlet," XV (Oct., 1948), 1136-1139. (Review of Jones's edition of Hamlet. See NEWS LETTER of June, 1951, page 1.)

Oliver Evans - "James's Air of Evil: 'The Turn of the Screw,'" XVI (Feb., 1949), 175-187. (Opposes the "psychological" interpretation of Edmund Wilson.)

Leslie Fiedler - "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" XVI (June, 1948), 664-671.

Geoffrey Gorer - "The Erotic Myth of America," XVII (July-August, 1950), 589-594.

Elizabeth Hardwick - "Fiction Chronicle," XIV (July-August, 1947), 427-431. (Review of Italo Svevo, The Confessions of Zeno, pp. 429-430.)

Frank Jones - "Well-Intentioned/Well-Equipped," XV (May, 1948), 587-593. (Includes review of Charles Neider, The Frozen Sea: A Study of Franz Kafka.)

Alfred Kazin - "Melville as Scripture," XVII (Jan., 1950), 67-75. (Objects to some of the uses of psychology in Richard Chase, Herman Melville.)

William Phillips - "Dostoevsky's Underground Man," XII, (Nov.-Dec., 1946), 551-561.

Philip Rahv - "Melville and his Critics," XVII (Sept.-Oct., 1950), 732-735. (Review of Newton Arvin, Herman Melville.)

Delmore Schwartz - "The Grapes of Crisis," XVIII (Jan.-Feb., 1951), 7-15. (Section entitled "The Psychiatrist as Hero," 11-12.)

Lionel Trilling - "A Note on Art and Neurosis," XII (Winter, 1945), 41-48. (See NEWS LETTER of April, 1951, page 3.)

William Troy - "Notes on Finnegan's Wake," VI (Summer, 1939), 97-110. (Mentions Jung's theory of the collective unconscious as one influence.)

Robert Warshow - "Sadism for the Masses," XVII (Feb., 1950), 200-202. (Review of G. Legman, Love and Death.)

Richard Chase - "An Approach to Melville," XIV (May-June, 1947), 285-294.

----- - "Dissent on Billy Budd," XV (Nov., 1948), 1212-1218.

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Robert Warshow - "Sadism for the Masses," XVII (Feb., 1950), 200-202. (Review of G. Legman, Love and Death.)

(Submitted by E. L. N.) AMERICAN LITERATURE: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography, first appeared in 1929. From its beginning there were, in addition to the scholarly articles and reviews, sections devoted to "Notes & Queries," "Articles on American Literature Appearing in Current Periodicals," and "Works in Progress"---which last included doctoral dissertations.

A survey of the first ten volumes of this journal reveals the heavily socio-economic preoccupations of its originators and editors, and, by inference, the preoccupations of those professors whose chief concern was American literature and civilization (though the inter-disciplinary committees in the specialty of American Civilization were not yet familiar parts of the Graduate Schools).

Vol. I contains nothing in psychological-literary criticism or in investigation of psychological formulations as source materials for literature and shapers of civilization. In Vol. II, No. 3 (Nov., 1930), 209-231, there appears an article of interest to the historian of psychology:

Edward Hungerford - "Poe and Phrenology." To cite this article is not to equate phrenology with psychoanalysis (if such a disclaimer is needed!); it is merely to call attention to the very early use of psychological formulations, however primitive, ---and phrenology was such a set of primitive formulations--- as literary materials.

Vol. III has a similar article in No. 4 (Jan., 1932), 350-384:

Edward Hungerford - "Walt Whitman and His Chart of Bumps."

The first psychoanalytic note was struck in the third volume, in the listing of "Articles. . . Appearing in Current Periodicals";

Edmund Wilson - "Sophocles, Babbitt, and Freud," from the NEW REPUBLIC, LXV (Dec. 3, 1930).

There were a number of articles on our subject in the less "scholarly" magazines, none of which belong properly to a survey of AMERICAN LITERATURE, which has nothing for our specialty in Vols. IV or V. If any of the dissertations in "Works in Progress" was more than superficially dependent on psychological formulations or techniques, such dependence is not apparent in the titles.

Vol. VI contains a short article in No. 4, 433-434 ("Notes & Queries"):

N. Bryllion Fagin - "Herman Melville and the Interior Monologue,"

Vols. VII, VIII, and IX yield nothing in our field. In Vol. X, 275-288, there appears:

Hyatt Howe Waggoner - "Science and the Poetry of Robinson Jeffers." Waggoner surveys the use of scientific material, including psychoanalysis, as well as the shaping effect of the sciences on poetic techniques.

Dr. Wornahoudt suggests:

Erik Erikson - Childhood and Society (Norton, New York, 1951). It has some fine chapters analyzing American folklore and ballads and is an excellent book for anyone interested in psychoanalysis and anthropology.

Other articles culled from miscellaneous sources are:

"Art and the Psychologist," LONDON TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT for April 27, 1951. This is an acid review of Adrian Stokes, Smooth and Rough.

Sidney Ratner - "The Historian's Approach to Psychology," JOURNAL OF THE HISTORY OF IDEAS, Vol. II, No. 1 (Jan., 1941), 95-122. Presents the case for utilizing "in their expositions of the forces patterning man's history, . . . the insights, the principles, and the techniques offered by the psychologists. . . . The scientific historian, then, is confronted with the necessity of extending his critical acumen from the weighing of evidence concerning what events occurred in specific times and places to inquiring why they happened as they did and what psychological mechanisms they involved." Briefly characterizes such historians as Beard, Toynbee, Turner, and Parrington!

Anne Anastasi and John Foley, Jr. - "A Survey of the Literature on Artistic Behavior in the Banormal." Published in four parts: (I) "Historical and Theoretical Background," JOURNAL OF GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. XXV (1941), 111-142; (II) "Approaches and Interrelationships," ANNALS OF THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, Vol. XLII (1941), 1-112; (III) "Spontaneous Productions," PSYCHOLOGICAL MONOGRAPH, Vol. LII (1940), 1-7; (IV) "Experimental Investigations," JOURNAL OF GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. XXV (1941), 187-257.

E. R. Dodds - The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley, 1951). "Armed with the analytical weapons of modern anthropology and psychology, the age-old tradition of the absence of primitive and irrational forces in Greek culture is queried."

Harold Rosenberg - "The Psychoanalyst and the Writer," COMMENTARY, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Sept., 1950), 272-275. The Bergler and Schneider books referred to above are adversely reviewed!

Additions to the Subscription List as of April 15

Joshua Bloch, Jewish Division, NY Pub. Lib., 5th Ave. and 42nd Street, New York, N. Y.

Herbert Cahoon, NY Pub. Lib., 5th Ave. and 42nd St., New York, NY
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NOTE: If any members wish the next (June) issue sent to a
summer address, please let the Editor know before the end
of May.